THE SOUTHERN STRUGGLE FOR PURE GOVERNMENT.

An Address.

by

GEORGE W. CABLE

before the

MASSACHUSETTS CLUB, BOSTON,

at

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY,

1890.

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PRESS OF SAMUEL USHER,
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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE MASSACHUSETTS CLUB: —

The great patriot and statesman, in whose birth the American nation to-day renews its annual joy and thanksgiving, keeps the place he holds in the world's regard not alone as the father of modern self-government, but as also himself ideally personifying the freedom of the governed mated to the purity of those chosen to rule. I trust, therefore, you will count it not inappropriate to this occasion that I venture to address you concerning the struggle for pure government in our Southern States.

Except in Russia, there is now hardly a people of European origin on the earth that has not secured in some valuable degree the enjoyment of electoral representative government; and although the impurities remaining in such governments lie mainly in defective electoral methods, yet the world has ceased to look to imperial rule for refuge or remedy. Not the suffocation but the purification of the ballot is recognized as the key to the purification of government.

But how shall we purify the ballot? We cannot say, Only the pure shall vote, and then decide upon crude generalizations who, or what sorts, are pure. That would be as if, instead of making a filter work thoroughly, we should forbid that any but pure water be put into the filter. Such a step would only be a long stride on the straight road to imperial tyranny. But we can say, reasonably and practically, that the vote shall be pure, and trust ultimately to see a purified ballot purify the balloters. Not the banishment of all impure masses from the polls, but the equal and complete emancipation of all balloters from all impure temptations and constraints, is the key to the purification of the ballot.

It stands to reason that most men, being the ruled, not the rulers, want good government. If, without constraint, they choose bad government, it is by mistake.

But though most men want good government, they want it mainly for themselves. Men can never safely depend upon others to supply them benevolently with good government. The only free government is self-government. But the only practicable self-government on any large scale being electoral and representative, the purity of the ballot becomes a vital necessity. For the only true end of self-government is free government, and of free government pure government, and of pure government the purity, no less than the prosperity, of the whole people. Yet no government or political party has ever yet attained complete purity. For ends must wait on means, and pure government cannot be got except through free government, nor free government except by self-government.

Indeed, purity and freedom are so interwoven and identified with one another that to distinguish between them scarcely separates them in the mind. But a pure government is especially one where all the people are fully and equally protected from the possible corruptness of officials, while a free government is one in which all civil classes, in office or out of office, and all political parties, in power and out of power, are fully and equally protected from each other. Obviously there can be no united and effective effort for such pure government while an insecurity or incompleteness of free government keeps classes or parties preoccupied with one another's actual or possible aggressions. The end must wait on the means. Pure government is pure gold, but to get gold in permanent supply you must first have iron. Free government is iron — iron and steel. So, first of all, free government, then pure government.

Yet we must face the opposite truth. A government not free nor trying to become free must become corrupt — cannot become pure — but even a free government cannot remain corrupt and continue free. True freedom is liberty with equity, corruption is liberty without equity, and no man gets a freedom he ought not to have without paying for it some other freedom he cannot afford to lose. The Reconstruction state governments in the South after the Civil War were set up on very broad and commendable foundations of free government, but not using free government as an end to pure government they fell, owing their fall largely to the corruption of the ballot, and actually overthrown by a party whose opposing policy was the impracticable proposition of pure government first and free government afterward.

And now, as to these things, where do we stand, the children of

as pure a father as any country ever had? The answer is painful. There is probably not a State in our Union whose good citizens do not confess and lament corruption in its elections. What the governor of New York writes of his own State is true of the whole Union: "Bribery and intimidation are not confined to any locality." How is this?

For one thing, overlooking the degree of freedom attained by other countries since we declared ours, we have learned to lay upon our freedom the false charge of having produced our political corruption. Many countries have become almost or quite as free as we, even in the matter of suffrage. They teach us not that we are too free, but only that we have been too well pleased with freedom as an ultimate end.

But our fathers had not only to establish free States and free institutions without models before them. They had other great tasks. For instance, they had to learn State and national banking and general public financiering: and they learned them in a series of gigantic blunders, in comparison with whose devastating results those of the Southern Reconstruction governments of 1868–77 sink into insignificance. They had to learn how to vote wisely; and no people ever learned how to vote except by voting.

Moreover, while for over a hundred years we have had great freedom, for three fourths of that time we had also a great slavery. Even while we had it the majority of the whole people in every State of the Union wanted both free and pure government. But some sought pure government through free government, while others demanded pure government before free government. Out of the resulting strife has come the nation's declaration for all time; that pure government cannot come before free government, and that not even in the name of pure government shall true freedom be abridged.

Another obvious truth: pure and free government advance by alternating steps. Men will not help others to set up pure government who refuse them free government. Nor will men help those to advance free government who refuse them pure government; and if each school holds out hostilely against the other, ruin must result; but if not, a patriotic and entirely noble political commerce may spring up between the two. A nation so doing may have to see itself outstripped for a moment in the direction of free government by others less pure, or of pure government by others less free, or of

material wealth by others neither so pure nor so free; but it is nevertheless on a broader, higher road to perfect freedom, purity, and prosperity at last, than any different sort can possibly be.

There is a part of our country, however, where conditions are seemingly so peculiar and exceptional that to innumerable minds, both there and throughout the nation, no theorizing on the relations and necessities of pure government can be made to appear practicably applicable. We must grapple with the very facts in this specific case or else our theorizings are of no use to those who, in North or South, stand distraught between two seemingly antagonistic necessities, the one for pure, the other for free, governments in our Southern States.

Let us take them seriatim. First, then, as to the statement that virtually the whole mass of Negroes in the South cares nothing for good government, we say that to establish such a vast exception to so general a truth requires exhaustive proofs. Where are they? Reconstruction times do not furnish them. They may show that the Reconstruction party, white and Negro, constantly and formidably opposed by an exclusively white party, hostile to the equal civil liberty of whites and Negroes, did not achieve, maybe did not often try to achieve, purity in government. But they only prove our premise, that there can be no effective effort for pure government while an insecurity of free government keeps classes or parties occupied with one another's actual or possible aggressions. The great majority of the Negroes are illiterate, improvident, reckless, and degraded. But so is the Irish peasant. So is the Russian serf. The fact is proof presumptive that — Irish, Russian, or Negro — they are far more concerned for a better freedom, whether economic, civil, or political, than for pure government; but not that pure government is something they would rather not have.

How can it be? Tens of thousands of the Negroes own the land they till, the houses they live in. With scarcely a rich man among them, they hold to-day certainly not less than $100,000,000, some say $160,000,000 worth of taxable wealth. Over 1,100,000 of their children, half their total school population, are enrolled in the public schools, where their average daily attendance is more than 600,000. Their principal industry is agriculture, the most peaceable and peace-promoting labor of the hand known to mankind. Their crops in the year 1889, unless high journalistic authority is in error, aggregated the value of $900,000,000. Is it to be believed that the whole mass,

or any preponderating fraction, of such a people as this is so supinely indifferent to, or so abjectly ignorant of, the advantages of pure over corrupt government that they prefer the corrupt, other things being equal? Hundreds of thousands of them take pains — not a few take risks — to vote, voting far oftener for white men than for colored. Do these all prefer corrupt rulers and measures, and for mere corruption's sake? The answer is familiar. Their leaders, it is said, do actually want corruption for its own sake, to fatten on it, and in vast solid masses the great black herd blindly follow these leaders. But wherein lies the strange power of these leaders? In consanguinity? They are oftener white than colored. In promises of official patronage? There are not places enough to go half around among the leaders. How then? By the literal buying of ballots? Ballot-buying may turn the fortunes of a close election; it can never make whole vast masses of people vote all one way.

How, then, do these leaders lead them? They lead them by promises of deliverance from oppressive or offensive public conditions from which the Negroes see other men profitably free, and long themselves to be delivered. That men should be willing to follow whoever is for their induction into all and only the full measure of American freedom, and count that their supreme necessity, is the poorest proof in the world that they are all opposed to pure government. The assertion is emotional, not rational.

But we are told they would become so were the hand of suppression withdrawn. This is a very ancient argument. A century ago it was believed and practically applied against millions of white men exactly as it is now urged against millions of Negroes. Manhood suffrage, even for white citizens of the United States, is barely seventy-five years old, and of all the earlier States of the Union is youngest in New England. To-day, with but one or two inconsiderable exceptions, from Austria to Australia every white men's government in the world has either reached, or is steadily moving toward, manhood suffrage. Yet we must still meet the same argument, long overturned as to white men, but readapted and made special against Negroes as so far exceeding white men in cupidity, vanity, and passion that what political experiment may have proved as to ignorant, unintelligent, and unmoneyed white men, is not thereby made even supposably possible as to Negroes.

The loose assertions offered to support this assumption we deny. We deny that this utter and manifest unfitness of the Negro is believed

by all respectable Southern white men. All through the South there are worthy white men who deny that the experiment need be futile or disastrous. We deny that Southern white men are so exclusively able to decide this point that their word ought to be final. Some men may be too far off, but just as certainly others may be too near, to decide it uncounseled; and, in fact, every great step thus far taken toward the Negroes' real betterment has been first proposed by those remote from him, while it has been condemned as idle or dangerous by those nearest him. We deny that the experiment of full civil and political liberty has ever been fairly tried on the Negroes of the South. One thing has always been lacking, the want of which has made the experiment a false and unfair trial. It has always lacked the consent — it has had the constant, vehement opposition — of wellnigh the whole upper class of society in the Commonwealths where the Negroes' new citizenship lay. Without land-ownership, commerce, credit, learning, political or financial experience, the world's acquaintance and esteem, the habit of organization, or any other element of political power except the naked ballot and the ability to appeal at last resort to the Federal authority, and with almost the whole upper class of society and wellnigh all these elements of power skilfully arrayed against them, the Negroes, accepting the party leadership and fellowship of any and every sort of white man who would only recognize their new tenure of rights, took up the task abandoned to them in confident derision by their former masters, of establishing equal free government for all, in States whose governments had never before been free to other than white men.

The resulting governments were lamentably corrupt. But it was the climacteric hour of official corruption throughout a whole nation hitherto absorbed in the rougher work of establishing a complete freedom. Even so they began to rise on broader, truer foundations of political liberty and equity than had ever been laid in those States before: and certainly no people, even when not antagonized by the great bulk of a powerful class above them, ever set up both free and pure government in the first twelve years of their bodily emancipation or the first nine years of their enfranchisement.

Another twelve years has passed, with the Negro's political power nullified, and the white, intelligent, wealth-holding class in uninterrupted control; and still that class is longing and groping in vain for pure government and is confessedly farther from it at the end of its twelfth year of recovered control than it was at the end of its first,

while the principles of free government are crowded back to where they were twenty years ago. No, it is not the admission of, it is the refusal to admit, the Negro into political copartnership — not monopoly — on the basis of a union of free and pure governments, that has produced the very conditions which, it was argued, such admission would precipitate.

It was this refusal that threw him, intoxicated with more importance and power than either friend or foe ever intended him to have, into the arms of political hypocrites and thieves. It is this refusal that has demonstrated with ghastly clearness the truth — counted suicidal to confess — that even the present ruling class is not strong or pure enough to establish and maintain pure government without the aid and consent of the governed. I admit the Negro problem is not always and only political. It is not only and always a peculiarly African proneness to anarchy, nor is it always race instinct, it is often only the traditional pride of a master class, that remands the Negro to a separate and invidious tenure of his civil rights; but it is to perpetuate this alienism that he is excluded from political copartnership, and it is the struggle to maintain this exclusion that keeps the colored vote solid, prevents its white antagonists from dividing where they differ as to other measures, and holds them under a fatal one-party idea that rules them with a rod of iron.

We see, then, how far the facts of history and present conditions are from proving the Southern States an exception to the rule that pure government cannot be got by setting its claims before and above free government. Rather, they present these States as striking examples of free government itself falling into decay through the well-meant but fatal policy of seeking its purification by constricting the rights and liberties of the weaker and inferior ranks of society.

Washington, bidding a last farewell to public office, and uttering his paternal warnings to the people, pronounced, not largeness or universality of freedom, nor illiteracy, nor unintelligence, but a rankness of party spirit, the worst enemy of popular government. If he could characterize "the alternate domination of one faction over another" as "itself a frightful despotism," what would he have said of an arbitrarily permanent domination of one party over another, and a culmination of party spirit into the one-party idea — the idea that a certain belief and policy are so entirely, surely, and exclusively right that men who do not assent to them are incendiary, vile, outrageous, and not morally entitled to an equal liberty and security

under the laws with those from whom they dissent? A State ruled by such a sentiment is no longer under free government. A people seeking pure government in that way are trifling with destiny and hurrying toward disaster, and in simple humanity, if not in their own involved interest, those who see their error ought to stop them if there is a way to do it consistent with righteous law.

Is there any such way? Let us look at the situation. The Reconstruction government in the South, while still holding, not for Negro domination, which they never held for, but for equal free government for all, lost in large measure the nation's respect and goodwill by an acute moral and financial defalcation. They were allowed to be overturned by measures often severely revolutionary, on the assurance of their opponents to the nation and to the world that their only desire and design was pure government, and that they were more than willing and amply able to furnish it at once and follow it closely with the amplest measure of free government contemplated in the Amendments to the Constitution. Some Southern men may deny that this was the understanding on which their party was allowed to retake the monopoly of its State governments. The question is not important, for it is not proposed here to mourn the extinction of the Reconstruction governments as one mourns the death of the righteous, nor to lay upon the men who destroyed them the whole blame of the error committed. Whatever one or another's understanding was, it cannot for a moment be denied that this was the hope and expectation of the great North and West. The blame, if blame were worthy of count, was on those, whether in North or South, in the Republican or Democratic, or any third or fourth party, who comforted themselves with the delusion that a policy of pure government first, free government afterward, could produce either free or pure government. Seeing at last that this delusion is *what* was and is to blame, the question *who* was to blame — where no side was wrong by choice — is a question we may sink, with its answer, forever beneath the sea of oblivion.

Through twelve weary and distressful years this fallacy has been given as fair a trial as anything ever had, and to-day more manifestly than ever before it is weighed in the balances and found wanting. For years the show and promise of better things joined themselves with a faith in the all-healing powers of time, peace, and material prosperity to soothe the nation's solicitude and sustain its hope. The Southern State governments had hardly changed hands when their

financial credit began to rise with a buoyancy which proved — if such proof had been needed — that it was only the governments, repudiated and antagonized by the wealth-holding portion of the people, that were bankrupt. Whether their action was justifiable or not, it was nearer the truth to say the people had bankrupted the governments than that the governments had bankrupted the people.

For a long time the sincerity and earnest diligence of the more intelligent and liberal wing of the Southern conservatives bent itself to a most commendable progressive measure, one which had already been irrevocably begun under the Reconstruction governments as an indispensable adjunct to the extension of civil or political freedom. This measure was the expansion of the public school system, a system which, wherever it has found large establishment, in America, England, or elsewhere, has always followed, not produced, the extension of the suffrage. This measure was, and is, practicable even under the rule of the one-party idea, because while it is the own child of the scheme of free government first, it is almost the only important factor of that scheme which does not obviously antagonize the opposite policy. And yet this opposite policy of pure government first is not, and by nature can not be, the zealous promoter of the free school system that a free government policy is sure to be. A policy of freedom first inevitably precipitates and perpetuates an immediate and imperative exigency which can be met only by an entirely ample provision for the whole people's education. The policy of pure government first, assuming that ignorance and impurity are much the same thing, promises that ignorance shall, therefore, not participate in government, and casting about now on the right hand and now on the left for expedients to prevent it, accepts free schools as one, but with a divided credence and a tame enthusiasm. This is why the Southern States to-day have only schools enough for half their school population, and believe they are bearing as heavy a burden of school tax as any people of equal means can, while the States and Territories of the West, under the ideas of free government first and of two parties of equal rights, are taxing themselves far heavier, even where they have less wealth. The example of some of these Western communities completely proves that the only sense in which it can be said that the South is doing all it can for public education is that Southern State legislators may be levying as heavy a school tax as they can reasonably hope to collect from a people lulled by the assurances and methods of a

policy of pure government first. It has been much reiterated in the South and reëchoed in the North that the task of public education in the Southern States suffers a unique and unparalleled drawback in the fact that while the Negroes enjoy nearly half the outlay of school funds, almost the entire amount of those funds is paid by white taxpayers. But assuming this to be quite true in every other regard, there are two points in which it is not so. First, the very alphabet of economics teaches us that all taxes do not rest entirely on those from whom they are collected, but that hundreds of thousands of men who are too poor to be found enumerated on the tax rolls are for all that reached by taxation through the medium of rents and similar indirections. And, second, that the fact quoted is far from being unique and unparalleled. The only thing peculiar about it is that this lower and unmoneyed mass, which, as a matter of good investment in the whole public interest, is in every State in the Union freely accorded an enjoyment of the school funds out of all proportion to its money contributions, happens in the South to be a distinct race which has been working for the last one hundred and fifty years but has been drawing wages only for the last twenty-five.

Another great progressive measure which accompanied and still accompanies the policy of pure government first, though it too began under the opposite régime, was one which no policy save absolute anarchy can ever resent. This was the development of material resources, the multiplication of industries, the increase of material wealth. The party that represented the bulk of society's landed and personal wealth, inspired by the only policy it could believe to be honorable or safe, entered into entirely new relations to the public credit of their towns, counties, and States, and gave the energy of a new hope to the making of private fortunes. The successes of this movement have been positively brilliant. The unadorned true stories of Anniston and Chattanooga and Birmingham, of Memphis and Nashville and Atlanta and Richmond, are as romantic as they are inspiring; a theme lingered upon by Northern tongues and a Northern press with a warmth that indicates a proper recognition of the North's own great gain in the South's prosperity. Nevertheless the very fulness and renown of this success has wrought two grave errors. A sagacious and enterprising few may get rich in any country blessed with natural resources, but no country ever won or can win a large and permanent prosperity save by the prosperity of its poor. No country can ever build a sound prosperity while it tolerates

conditions that keep a large lower mass on low wages and long hours. This is the word, not of politicians alone, but of economists and financiers, and this is a fact which the sunburst of a sudden great material development in many regions of the South has hidden in deep shadow. That Southern men, still so largely under the stress of Southern traditions, should overlook this is largely natural and excusable; but that the North, too, with its so wide and fortunate experience of better conditions, should not see and point out the oversight seems strange. It may be doubted that there is a high school between Boston and Denver whose pupils are not taught that the greatest source of the decay of nations is the congestion of wealth and the degradation of poverty. No sufficient offsets for it have yet been found in any scheme of public society, but the search for them is the great quest of the age, and the safety, peace, and prosperity of Europe, the Americas, and the great Australasian colonies is mainly due to the adoption of such noble though incomplete offsets as have been found. These are equal rights and protection to opposing parties, free schools for the whole people, manhood suffrage, and a pure, free ballot.

Such is one of the two great errors that have fastened themselves upon the otherwise entirely admirable material development of the "New South." The other is twin to it. It is that this material development is not only economically sound, but that it has also a political potentiality, and can of itself solve, and is solving, the Southern problem. Where is its solution? The claim is absurd. It is simply fantastical to expect a mere aggregation of private movements for the building of private fortunes to unravel the snarled thread of civil and political entanglements in a commonwealth. It may in self-defence rally to the support of public financial credit, but farther it is not in its nature to go. What has this one done? We are reminded that "in the South there are Negro lawyers, teachers, editors, dentists, doctors, and preachers working in peace and multiplying with the increasing ability of their race to support them." But whence came they? Nine tenths of those teachers and preachers, and ninety-nine hundredths of those lawyers, editors, dentists, and doctors have got their professions in colleges built and sustained by Northern money, and taught by Northern missionary teachers, whom the great bulk of this New South rewards with social ostracism. They work in peace, but what a peace! A peace bought by silent endurance of a legalized system of arrogant incivilities that

makes them, in almost every public place, conspicuous subjects of a public disdain which is not always even silent. What single one of those tyrannous and vulgar intrusions of private social selection into purely public places has this New South of iron and coal mines and new railways and cotton-mills and oil-presses removed? Not one! From the ennobling relaxations of the drama, the opera, the oratorio, the orchestral symphony, and sonata; from the edifying diversions of the popular lecture, the picture gallery, and even the sacred service and sermon of the popular preacher; from the refining comforts of the first-class railway coach and the public restaurant; from the character-making labors, disciplines, and rewards of every academy, college, and even law, medical, and divinity school, supported by Southern money and attended by white youth; and from the popular respect paid to those who enjoy these things and withheld from those to whom they are forbidden, these Negro lawyers, teachers, editors, dentists, doctors, and preachers, "working in peace and multiplying with the increasing ability of their race to support them," are shut out; shut out by rules sustained by State legislation, which refuses to share even the Decalogue on equal terms with the Negro, but annexes to it an eleventh and "colored" commandment, "Thou shalt not try to become a gentleman." Where has this New South movement opened to colored people, paying taxes or not, professionally educated or not, the privileges of a single public library?

Our attention is challenged to $900,000,000 worth of crops raised in the South last year. We are not told that the producers of this vast abundance enjoy in one full and common measure all the public rights declared to be theirs by the national Constitution. That falsehood so long believed by so many even of those who uttered it, in North and South, is utterly worn out. But we are asked if we can doubt that such a product came from peaceful fields and contented and duly remunerated labor. Yes, we can! Did the vast wheat crops of ancient Egypt come from peaceful fields and a well-contented husbandry? Are her pyramids the product of duly remunerated labor? Did the great crop of 1860, raised when the Negroes were half their present numbers, come from freemen satisfied with their wages? From the eastern borders of Russia a huge wave of material development is at present rolling eastward across Siberia with an energy and speed until lately supposed by Americans to be found only in our own great, free West. The commerce of the Volga rivals that of the Mississippi. The volume of trade of the

city of Nizhni Novogorod rose from some $60,000,000 in 1868 to about $120,000,000 in 1881. A great through Siberian railway, to be completed in from three to six years, is now in various stages of survey and construction, whose trunk line alone will reach eastward to the Japan Sea, about 5,000 miles from Moscow. It runs already through millions of acres of fruitful fields, tilled by an industrious peasantry. But is it an index of the people's liberty? Is Siberia a free country? Spain is a land of harvest and of song. Have the laborers in her vineyards and oliveyards a freedom that ought to satisfy a citizen of the United States? Has America any class of society in which we can afford to cultivate contentment with a Russian or a Spanish measure of civil or political liberty? There is a contentment which is more intolerable to the order and interest of a free country like ours than a discontent that leaves the ripened grain unharvested to guard the rights of freemen. Which of the two has this industrial development, or any other outcome of the policy of pure government first, cherished and stimulated? For twelve years it has persuaded an apparent majority of the nation to leave to it the fitting of the Negro for citizenship, even refusing national aid to lift the burden of public education it counts insupportable; yet to this day it has made not the slightest provision for admitting any Negro to the full measure of any civil or political right by virtue of acquired fitness. The New Orleans Times-Democrat of November 5 says: "The race issue is a natural antagonism and has nothing whatever to do with education or the lack of education. To the Negro varnished with such learning as he is capable of acquiring, there is even a more prouounced antipathy than to the Negro of the cotton field and kitchen." "The schools," said The Atlanta Constitution barely six months ago, "have been in active operation for over twenty-five years, and it is estimated that several hundred thousand of the colored voters can now read and write. The difficulties, however, have increased with the progress of education, and are now more difficult than they ever were before. Not the slightest advancement toward an adjustment of the two races on political grounds has been made anywhere, and even the direction of such advance is a matter of speculation." In plain words, after twelve years of wandering through a night of false political traditions, these largely sincere guides to pure government first and free government afterward acknowledge at last that they are lost in the woods under a starless sky.

The failure to get good government has been absolutely abject. Not only has no material advance been made toward free government, but the governments that started out twelve years ago full of honest intentions to be or become pure have grown confessedly corrupt, and are now avowing with mingled hardihood and shame things that a few years ago they denied with indignation. Let it be gladly admitted that open personal bribery of officials is rare. And naturally, for where an upper and property-holding class holds secure and arbitrary power over an illiterate and destitute laboring class, and really desires pure government, personal official integrity will still be demanded, even after equity has been overlooked in legislation. In the struggle of an under class for better freedom against great odds the personal impurities of leaders may be for some time overlooked. But in an effort of an upper class for pure government, the personal dishonesty of officials will be the last symptom of hopeless and corrupt failure. The fact still stands that the Southern party which really started in quest of the higher grounds of pure government is miring in a mass of corrupt measures. In the late Prohibition movement in Georgia its wholesale bribery of ignorant Negro voters was open and boastful. In Alabama, Mississippi, and other cotton States, under a domination which more and more tends to become merely a tax-payers' government, there has sprung up a system of crop-lien laws, mainly, if not wholly, devoted to the protection of landlords and storekeepers against the farm tenants, so barren of counter-protections for the tenant that they have fairly earned the name, given them by a United States judge in Arkansas, of "anaconda mortgages." Said this gentleman in an address before the Arkansas State Bar Association in 1886: "As a result of these defective and bad laws, the State is afflicted with a type of money-lenders, traders, and methods of doing business, the like of which was never seen before." Quoting from a Parliament report the statement that a certain creditor in Ireland had charged a Connaught peasant a rate of interest aggregating 43½ per cent. per annum, he asked, "What is 43½ per cent. compared to the profits charged by the holders of anaconda mortgages on tenants in Arkansas? They would scorn 43½ per cent." And another member of the association had already said of a signer of one of these mortgages: "A place where he could borrow money at usury would be an asylum to him. I have known men — laboringmen, farmers and renters — to pay 20 and 25 per cent. interest for money and secure its payment rather than

mortgage their property and buy supplies on credit." If, in the face of these facts, Negroes are moving by tens of thousands from North and South Carolina to Mississippi and Arkansas, that surely is something not for us, but for North and South Carolina to explain. Probably the best explanation beyond the eager enterprise of railroad companies is that these ignorant laborers, like thousands of other emigrants, do not know what they are going to.

It will be said that the burdens of this system fall as heavily on a white man as if he were black. That may be; but it is a system unknown in our free land, except in States where the tenant class is mostly Negroes, and just as far as white debtors fall under it it illustrates a fact of which it is far from being the only proof: that this whole policy of the black man's repression under a tax-payers' government is constantly escaping from its intended bounds and running into a fierce and general oppression of the laboring classes, white or black. Says the tax-payer to the tenant: "Why should you vote? What right have you to administer on my property?" Says the tenant: "Then what right have you to administer on my poverty?" Yet the wealth-holding, tax-paying citizens of these same States, still really and untiringly bent upon a large and noble renaissance in commerce, industry, and government, hold conventions and subscribe money to promote immigration. Can no one make them understand that no desirable immigration will ever come to a land of long hours, low wages, half rations of public education, and "anaconda mortgages"? The only way to make the South a good place for white men to come to is to make it a good place for black men to stay in.

It belongs to the imperfections of human society, even at its best, that, as yet, even under the purest, freest conditions, the poor suffer many times more chances than the rich of being legally punished for criminal errors. Moreover, the poor man's home and neighborhood becomes the cesspool and garbage heap of the prison's discharges, pardons, and escapes. The penal system of a country is therefore supremely the very poor man's concern, if not even his supreme concern. Hence it can never be stripped of a political value. If there were no other reason why the poor and ignorant should enjoy the scant self-protection of manhood suffrage, this would be enough. And with what clearness has the Southern party of one-party-and-pure-government proved this! For twelve years it has retained the convict-lease system; a prison system entirely peculiar to the

Southern States, and baffling comparison for corrupt and mortal cruelty with any system of prisons between here and St. Petersburg. But it has not merely retained the system. Legislatures and governors have, sometimes officially, sometimes unofficially, allowed "penitentiary rings" to become financial and political factors in the fortunes of their parties and their States, while all the better elements of party and press, burning with righteous shame and resentment and crying out against them, nevertheless endure the outrage clamped and riveted upon them by the exigencies of a one-party policy and the alienation of the great bulk of the poor man's vote. Nowhere this side Russia and Turkey is there a region of country of such ratio of wealth to population so recklessly, suicidally barren of reformatories for destitute and wayward boys and girls.

But there are other fruits of this well-meant but vain policy. In 1868 the Reconstruction party in North Carolina adopted, by a new constitution, the township system so well and favorably known in the States of the North and West. When in 1875 the party of pure government first gained power, however much personal corruption in office it may have found, it found as perfect a form of republican State government as there was in the Union. Every provision which any State enjoyed for the protection of public society from its bad members and bad impulses was either provided or easily procurable under the Constitution of the State. Yet within a year thereafter this party, for the avowed purpose of nullifying the power of their opponents in every county where those opponents were still in the majority, so amended the State Constitution as to take away the powers of self-government from every county in the State, and centralize them in the legislature under a base counterfeit of the system of government displaced by the "radicals" in 1868. Under this system, unknown to any other State, a preponderance of power over elections and election returns is secured to the majority in the State legislature, so great that no party retaining it can clear itself of the charge of corrupt intentions. In South Carolina this same party, now that rifle clubs and tissue ballots have passed away, confesses with the pardonable buoyancy of a relieved conscience that those measures were intolerably corrupt. Yet the Eight-box system still stands in their stead, raising the same blush of mortification, yet commanding from them the same subjection, as do lynch law and the convict-lease system.

Such are the conditions after twelve years of effort by an intelligent,

accomplished, determined, persistent, heroic people to hold down free government with one hand till they can set up pure government with the other. For twelve of our modern years, each one worth an ancient century, the cry of pure government first has prevailed not only among themselves but throughout the nation. For its sake this nation, almost as universally dazed as they by the bright plausibility of the mistake, has endured more deadly outrages against its citizens within its own borders than it would have tamely submitted to from all the great powers of the earth combined. The mass to be held in subjection has been the inferior in numbers, prowess, intelligence, wealth, and every other element of military or political strength; not turbulent and ferocious, but, on the Southern white man's testimony, tractable, amiable, dependent. The great national party that unhindered might have lifted this subjugation has for twenty-five years found itself opposed, and for the last twelve years pinioned, by another party quite or almost its match in numbers, power, integrity, and skill, vehemently charging it with rushing to the rescue of freedom too rashly for freedom's good. Most men of the class proposing to rule the South alone are honest in purpose, still filled with the spirit of freedom that gave us Washington, and yet as imperial as ancient Rome. It is not they, it is only their policy, that is found wanting. If any people on earth could have carried that policy to success they could. They have proved for all time and for all mankind that it can never be done.

The day in which this truth becomes a popular conviction among our white brethren of the South and among millions in the North, whose conversion waits only on theirs, will be the brightest, gladdest, best day that ever dawned on this continent. I believe that dawn is breaking now.

True, we hear voices through the Southern press crying new schemes for avoiding the simple necessities of free government; the establishment of a Negro territory; a disfranchisement of over half the Negroes by an educational qualification at the polls; their total disfranchisement by repeal of the Fourteenth Amendment; and in the very Senate a proposition to deport the Negro to Africa at the national expense, although at the same time and all over the South men in the same party from which the project comes are stating with new frankness their old doctrine that, though the country shall never belong to the Negro, the Negro simply shall belong to the country. But the very forlornness of these absurd projects, built, themselves,

on open confessions that the past is a failure and that something different must be done with all speed, is a final admission that the party pledged to solve the Negro question without consulting the Negro feels that it must change its policy or drop from under the nation's misplaced hopes.

The press of the nation almost with one voice rejects the scheme of a Negro Territory. We have more Negro Territories now than either white men or Negroes want. Our Indian Territory and Indian deportations and reservations have only wronged the savage, dishonored civilization, complicated the whole Indian question, and still hold it over us in costly and bloody suspense until we shall muster humanity and commonsense enough to do unto him as we would that our Southern brother would do unto the Negro — cease condescension, bounty, and fraud, and show mercy, justice, and human fraternity.

The proposition to repeal the Fourteenth Amendment deserves as little respect and attention as it is receiving. It would disfranchise thousands of tax-payers and thousands of men able to read and write, still leaving the franchise with hundreds of thousands of total illiterates paying no direct taxes. It would simply reëstablish a system of irrational race discrimination. It is well for the honor of the good State of Mississippi, where the proposition has arisen, that along with it comes word that at last an attempt has been made, with some hope of permanent success, to abolish in that State the convict-lease system.

As to the South Carolina scheme to limit the suffrage by an educational qualification, it seems to have died at birth, smothered under the evident fact that a State, nearly half of whose people are illiterate and nearly half of whose population of school age are without public provision against illiteracy, has no reason, as it has no right, to hope for an honest vote to disfranchise illiteracy. Well for it that there is no such hope. For no people ever escapes the incubus of a large illiteracy in its poorer classes except by providing a system of public education ample for the whole people. The demand for ample free education is created not by the contraction but by the enlargement of the right of suffrage. The most suicidal thing a party of free education can do is to favor an educational qualification of the suffrage before free education is amply supplied; for the vote that tips the scale aright whenever the issue is between adequate and inadequate provision is just this bugbear itself — the illiterate man's vote.

I hold that to prove the moral wrong of a thing is to prove just so far its practical worthlessness. To disfranchise the illiterate is to make the most defenceless part of a community more defenceless still. There is, I know, an educational qualification in Massachusetts. And there are a few illiterates. But there is no illiterate class, and the educational qualification here is not mainly for the protection of the suffrage, but a correctional punishment for inexcusable ignorance. The dangers of illiteracy have been almost as much overstated as its economic loss has been overlooked. Far the greatest danger in a wide illiteracy is to the illiterates themselves, and though there are reciprocal risks, the supreme urgency for its removal is not their dangerousness to the more fortunate and powerful classes, but the dangerousness of those classes to them. As for the Australian ballot system, wherever in this great Union of States it is adopted for the better liberty of every honest voter, learned or ignorant, rich or poor, and for the confusion of bribers and bribe-takers, learned or ignorant, rich or poor, may God give it good speed. But alas! for public liberty, purity, or safety wherever it is put into use to abridge the right of suffrage. No people is justly ready for a system of elections that prevents the voting of the illiterate man until it has first provided full public facility for every such man to learn to read and write and has then given him fair warning and time to learn.

The last and, it seems to me, the most irrational scheme of all is that embodied in the bill for the deportation of Negroes to Africa. The graceful arguments of its advocates in the Senate have been fully, ably, brilliantly answered in the Senate, and there is no excuse for more than a word to the point here. The early admissions and confessions of Abraham Lincoln have been much used in this debate by excellent men who still repudiate and antagonize the conclusions of his latest wisdom as they once did his earlier. Let us in that wonderful spirit of more than Washingtonian generosity which made him impregnable and irresistible in debate make every supposition of the advocates of deportation that can be made. Say the bill is found to be not unconstitutional; that hundreds of thousands of Negroes want to go; and that Southern white men generally will let them go, despite the palpable fact that the men most likely to go will be, to use an old Southern word, the most "likely" men — the men of health, strength, self-reliance, enterprise; and despite again the fact that no large emigration can take place without carrying away

millions of ready money with it. Every 100,000 of European immigrants to this country brings about $8,000,000 ready money with it. The industrial value of every 100,000 unskilled laborers is $80,000,000. Is a white immigration into the South likely to make up such losses? Let us suppose even this, although no one ever yet heard of one set of emigrants pouring into a country from which a poorer set was pouring out, and although if they will come at all there is abundance of room for them now, without deporting a single Negro.

What shall we say? We say, Pass your bill; get your ships ready; proclaim free passage to whosoever will accept it. Only let there be no compulsion. We are branded as a whole nation with our fathers' sin of bringing these people here; let us not add to that our own sin of driving them back. Therefore, no compulsions. But the land is full of compulsions. The main argument for their going is that we are making their stay here intolerable to them. Before we buy or hire one ship, whether these compulsions are in South Carolina or Mississippi, Illinois, Ohio, or Massachusetts, let these compulsions be removed. When State and Federal Governments have exhausted, as neither has yet done, all their powers of legislation and police to make the Negro in America as free as the white, then, if the Negro cannot be content and the people choose to bear the expense of his deportation, let the folly be charged to him, not us, of leaving a free land to which better men were glad to come and fill his voided place. But let this nation never again open the sacred Scriptures on Independence Day, or on the birthday of Washington lift up its hands to God, if, as matters now stand, we provide money or ships for the flight back to Africa of the victims of our own tyrannies. This is not the way to settle, but only to delay and hinder the settlement of the Negro question. Emigrants have been pouring out of Ireland for forty years; their government has encouraged their going, and still Ireland is full Irish, and the Irish question is not settled. Pass your Deportation bill. Help hundreds of thousands of able-bodied Negroes to sail to Africa. But unless you remove the already existing compulsions upon which you are counting to drive them on shipboard, the white immigrant will not come to take his place, and the Negro and the Negro question will be with us still.

It is true, also, that the infatuation for buying pure government at some other price than the Negro's civil freedom and coöperation still maintains the iron rule of the one-party idea. It is to this sentiment

and policy that we owe the enormities of lynch law, with its record of crimes beyond all cavil darker and fouler than all the robberies of the carpet-bag governments. For these murderous deeds are committed only because the lovers of order and pure government make no serious effort to prevent them. and these make no serious effort only because to punish these murderers would break the solid square of that one party which makes simple dissent from its doctrines infamous and criminal; the only party that ever has dared to declare openly to this free nation that it must and will rule, whether it represents a majority of the people or not. Is not that the very germinating and perpetuating principle of political corruption? Under what strange skies, on what distant planet, can we believe that such a tree will ever put forth the flowers and fruit of pure government?

In Nashville lately a gentleman of the Southern political orthodoxy gave me this story as pure fact: A traveler, similarly orthodox, sat down at the large supper-table of an Arkansas tavern. The landlord, bearing two large, steaming, covered vessels, identical in size and pattern, one in each hand, passed from guest to guest with always the same hospitable offer of choice: "Tea or coffee? Tea or coffee?" "Coffee," said one. He poured coffee. "Coffee," said a second. He poured coffee. "Coffee," said a third, fourth, and fifth. Again, once, twice, thrice, the teapot was deferentially drawn back and the coffee-pot poured forth its strong, black flood. So our traveler was reached. "Tea or coffee?" "Tea." The landlord drew back bristling, but the next instant was gracious again. He brought the huge teapot nimbly forward and poured from it the same hot, rank "Rio" that he had been pouring from the other pot, saying as he poured, "Tea!—in Arkansas! No, sir. In Arkansas you take coffee or you take nothing!" Our traveler drank it—without milk. It was, after all, simply his own one-party idea, and he had to swallow it.

But if the one-party idea still rules in the South, men are longing and reaching out for deliverance from it now as they have not done before since thirty years ago it first laid its complete bondage upon them. From out the South itself has lately been heard a strange, new, most worthy and most welcome sound, the voices of Southern white leaders of thought and action charging upon the North the duty and necessity of helping the South to solve the simple question which the Northern and Southern seekers after pure government through race rule and postponed rights have snarled into a bewildering problem. This problem has been drawn into the open field of literary

debate, a field from which, in these enlightened days, no practical question can escape until it is solved. But the question is no longer how this problem should be settled, it is only how to persuade men to settle it.

As to this, let us, first of all, stop blaming one another. Let us blame things, not men: ill conditions, false theories, bad schemes. Even among these let us waste no more wrath, no more grief, no more time over such as are done and can never be undone, but give ourselves faithfully, fraternally, unflinchingly to the pursuit and destruction of every living evil in theory or practice.

In the second place, the new, material development of the South must go on. If wealth does not necessarily make a people free or virtuous, neither does poverty. But thinking men in the South must rouse themselves to the economic and political necessity for a wider diffusion of wealth and more prosperous conditions of manual labor. The inattention to the study of economics in most Southern colleges amounts to a calamity. The reason of it is only too plain; it is that every page of modern civics and economics rebukes the "Southern" policy. To this is largely owing the superficial treatment of commercial and industrial conditions that characterizes the greater part of the South's press, and misleads a large class among its capitalists of commerce and the industries who count only themselves practical.

And again, the struggle for pure government must be neither abandoned nor abated. Only the effort to procure it at the expense of free government must be abandoned. Free government, the equal freedom of all in all public relations, must be recognized as its foremost and supreme necessity. Yet we do not demand a sudden and complete revolution of Southern sentiment and policy. All the nation is really impatient for is to see the South once turn and start in the right direction.

To this end let it be understood and declared in Southern circles, counsels, newspapers, that in the Southern States, just as truly as in Kansas, Ohio, or Massachusetts, a man can favor the Negro's enjoyment of a white man's public rights without being either a Republican or a traitor. He can be an equal-rights Democrat. I venture to say that the great bulk of the Republican party itself will look with more respect and pleasure upon a band of Southern opponents declaring themselves equal-rights Democrats, than upon a like reinforcement to its own ranks of Alabama protectionists trying to take the pitifully impossible pose of color-line Republicans.

If men cannot reconcile it to their self-regard or sense of expediency to declare for equality in all public rights at once, let them try a few at a time. Since 1865 the South has found on experiment, sometimes voluntary, sometimes otherwise, a great many things consistent with honor, safety, and peace that they had looked upon with loathing and alarm. Why not try a few more? Take, at random, any phase of the matter; for instance, railroad accommodation. If in every Southern town Negroes may ride in street-cars, where people crowd one another and no separate place offers to the ragtag the escape from the better kept which they always covet, why not try making first-class railway coaches equally free to all kinds of people decent in person and behavior, and require all kinds of ragtag to accept other accommodations? There is no risk in such a step; nobody really believes there is any; it is purely a matter of pride. But, be it pride or be it risk, the street-cars offered the extreme case, and in them the question has long been settled.

Or take another case. Probably the most indefensible, wanton, cruel deprivations suffered by Southern colored people on the score of race is their exclusion from the privileges of the public libraries. Let these excommunications from the pure wells of inspiration that are in good books be withdrawn. Let decent white Southerners say to decent colored Southerners: These concessions — or such as these — will we make to you if you will join with us politically for pure men and purifying measures. That were a buying of votes without dishonor to either side; and tens of thousands of colored votes, both of those that money can and that money cannot buy, can be bought at that price. Only let it not be fancied that even Negroes are going to be outwitted more than once or twice by promises that, if they will concede something now, their white fellow-citizens will concede something to them by-and-by. Says the Rev. Dr. Thirkield, of Atlanta, in a late allusion to the failure of the Prohibition movement in that city: "The Negro was recognized as a factor in the great civil contest; he was met as a man and a brother; promises were given him as to his civil rights in the conduct of the city government. Through his vote the campaign closed in victory. Then the contact between the two races was broken off; recognition and coöperation in civil, moral, and religious work ceased; pledges as to his civil rights were broken. The rum power saw its opportunity, organized for victory and brought again the reign of rum." So it may always be; there is a vote that divides but not destroys, and there is another that solidifies but does not save.

True, to influence the colored vote men must influence its leaders. But such concessions as we have mentioned are the daily spoken, written, and printed demands of every sort of colored leader, even of those who are accused of being influenced by nothing except the prospect of public office or its equivalent in cash. A full numerical share of public offices, clerkships, and contracts is not, and never was, the ultimatum of the vast colored vote, nor even of its colored leaders. They certainly never got it. No party ever promised them that all or half or one fourth of them should have offices or appointments, or ever gave them all, or half, if even a fourth, of the offices or appointments. But for the hostility of the great majority of Southern white men to an equality of public rights, no colored leader need ever have been given an office or appointment which he could not reasonably have been expected to fill with credit and honor. With genuine and coveted concessions offered to them in the matter of civil rights, colored voters will not be long finding leaders to whom it will be enough to concede with sincere and practical intent that merely being a Negro is not an insurmountable bar to the holding of office by one otherwise qualified.

Let the lovers of pure government in the South make such experiments. They can be made in small or large. There are towns, townships, counties, even States, one or two, in the South, where the two national parties are nearly equal in numbers. There, as elsewhere, the Negro cares, as he should, far more about his own civil and political rights than about who gets into the White House. In such a region a party of pure government ought, by reasonable and generous concessions to a better and more equal freedom, to gain enough colored votes to enable it advantageously to sacrifice some very bad white ones. Only these concessions must be made in the spirit and guise, not of condescension and protection, but of civil and political equality and fellowship, entering frankly and fully into council with the Negro's recognized leaders, white or colored, appealing to such as are "out of politics" only when those who are in politics will not listen to reason. Say what you will of party leaders and managers, the great Republican party itself would rather be hopelessly outnumbered and defeated in Mississippi or South Carolina by fair means in the interest of free government, than to see a Republican majority tyrannously defrauded under the pretence of procuring or upholding pure government. Nor do I doubt the great Democratic party also would in its turn rather be so outnumbered

and defeated than so to see its managers win victory at the price of honor.

But if Southern white men will not even yet of their own motion give this method of healing "the nation's running sore" a fair trial, there are still two ways by which such a trial may be had. One is a means which no generous mind in this nation would make other than its last choice. I mean, of course, Federal intervention.

I earnestly protest I have learned too much from the teachings of Washington ever to be a partisan. On the race question I am a Republican; on some others I am a Democrat; and on all questions I know and am ready to avow exactly where I stand. The Southern party for pure government first has been given the best twelve years that ever shone on earth in which to make Federal intervention unnecessary, and has so utterly failed that it is to-day seen asking in the United States Senate for a species of Federal intervention, by no means the safest or best or most constitutional, to help it to remove bodily to Africa the problem whose obvious solution it will not allow even to be tried. I do not favor Federal intervention for the establishment of equal civil and political rights in any State whatever, except as a last resort. As to Federal elections, at least, it is a right placed beyond cavil by the plain letter of the Constitution. But even there the intention that it should never be other than an unpreferred alternative is plain. Yet I see to-day only one alternative intervening. Of it I shall speak in a moment. But for this alternative, it seems to me totally incompatible with the dignity and honor of this nation that, after twelve years of amiable, hopeful waiting, it should let itself be kept indefinitely waiting still for admission to its own simplest rights by the plausible and eloquent doorkeepers of a do-nothing policy. A despair that prompts to action and deliverance is better than any false hope, and if such a despair moves this nation this year or next to the action it has borne so much to avoid, it can point to these doorkeepers, whether they be of North or South, and say: The blame of it and the shame of it be on you!

The only alternative I see, a hope of whose adoption can rightly postpone Federal intervention any longer, is for the Democratic party of the wide North and West to withdraw its support from the Southern policy now as it did in 1860. Said one of the national Democratic leaders to me a few years ago, "That is what we have got to do. The votes we lose by it in the South will be more than offset by those we shall gain in the North." But I maintain the case is better

for them than this. They will gain votes in the North, but they will no more lose the Southern white vote than they lost it when with cannon, bayonets, and sabres they forced it back into the Union from which it had seceded. Who will say that promptness on this point now may not save them from another such long vacation as procrastination cost them in 1860?

We have yet two years and a half before the next presidential election. Let it be hoped and urged that before then the believers in pure government instead of, or before, free government will of their own choice abandon their utterly self-condemned and futile policy, and make at least a visible and appreciable beginning upon that experiment of equal rights for all men and all parties, which, in the modern world at least, has never failed on fair trial. Has never failed: no, and would not fail in Hayti or San Domingo themselves if they would once give it the supremacy thus far held by the alternating military tyrannies of opposing factions, each delirious with the poison of the one-party idea.

During these two years and a half let it be made yet plainer than before that Federal intervention is no willing choice of the Republican, or any, party, and that what it, with the whole nation, most covets for every Southern State is as large, as full, as universal, and as prosperous a self-government as can be found in any part of this Union. And then, in all kindness for the South's own sake, as much as for the sake of any, in the name of the common welfare and the nation's honor, let the word be spoken, that if, by 1892, any State in this Union has not at least begun, with good show of completing, the establishment of equal American rights for all Americans, the men of this nation who — in whatever party — believe in free government first will strain their every nerve and sinew to give the nation a president and a congress that will establish it peaceably, promptly, and forever.

Mr. President and Gentlemen: The day in which that is done, whether by a Southern majority's own motion, or by the government's intervention, will be, like this twenty-second of February, a great birthday. It may date the birth of some momentary and aimless strife, though this I doubt; but it will certainly date the birth of a better peace, a wider, richer prosperity, a happier freedom of every citizen, and a freer, purer, government of this Union and of every State in this Union than this continent has ever yet seen. Yea, and complete fraternity between North and South. For it shall not have

been long done ere the whole South shall rejoice in the day of its doing as now it rejoices in the day when Lincoln freed the negro and in the day when Washington, by spurning the offer of royal rank and authority, declared that the only road to pure government is free government.